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featuring UD

Story ideas for print and broadcast media

Aug. 24, 1990

CRACK BABIES: UD PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS TO COPE WITH NEW CHALLENGES IN THE CLASSROOM

As teachers prepare for the influx of children returning to school this fall, a new challenge might be on the rise. With drug-exposed infants accounting for approximately 11 percent of the babies born nationally, a generation of crack babies entering kindergarten "will put a greater strain on a system already stretched thin," says Thomas Lasley, director of the teacher education department in the School of Education at the University of Dayton.

According to Dorene Holt, education coordinator for "Born Free," a community based substance abuse program for pregnant women at Miami Valley Hospital, "there are 375,000 babies born each year with prenatal drug addiction." She added that most of the drug-exposed babies are born in urban communities.

"We are preparing our students to deal with this issue in an appropriate way by exposing them to urban classroom experiences," says Lasley. All of UD's junior-level education majors are required to participate in a semester-long program that matches UD students with one of Dayton's elementary schools where they work alongside teachers. The program is helping future teachers identify the special needs of drug-exposed infants.

"We know that these children tend to have a short attention span and demonstrate aggressive behavior," says Roberta Weaver, assistant professor of teacher education at UD. "What we don't know," she says, "is what we can expect from them in the classroom. Looking to outside consultants, such as doctors and children services professionals, will be essential for educators to learn more about how to cope with drug-exposed infants."

Recognizing that these children will soon be in the schools, Weaver says, "We haven't defined exactly what the problems will be when we get them. It's going to be a trial-and-error process--finding out what works and what does not work."

For media interviews, contact Thomas Lasley at (513) 229-3344 or Roberta Weaver at (513) 229-3346.



The University of Dayton

For further information or assistance in scheduling interviews, contact Office of Public Relations, (513) 229-3241.